

Water Use Reporting Committee
Meeting Notes
October 15, 2003

Attending: Harold Ward, Anne Veeger, Henry Meyer, Jim Campbell, Emily Wild, Elizabeth Scott, Alisa Richardson, Joe McLoughlin, Harriet Powell, Connie McGreavy, Kathy Crawley

Meeting Purpose: The purpose of the meeting was to finalize recommendations, address the issue of voluntary or mandatory reporting, and finalize the content and responsibilities of the committee presentation on October 23.

Recommendations changes:

Members agreed to the 3 Million gallon per year threshold that is used to categorize a user as “major” for the Water System Supply Management Plans. They also agreed to eliminate recommendation six since a threshold was established. The need to include the analysis conducted by the committee regarding hydrologically-based thresholds was considered important to the final report and the presentation. The committee also added a time frame for a voluntary program (by January 2005) and mandatory reporting (January 2007). As a result the committee agreed to eliminate recommendation #5; a research effort intended to develop water use coefficients that accurately reflect Rhode Island agricultural irrigation practices and water use patterns.

Specifically changes to the recommendations are as follows:

2. Require “major” public suppliers to breakdown and report water use by category (domestic, commercial, industrial, institutional, “nonaccount”) quarterly, based on a calendar year. There was recognition that this may take time to implement as systems update software/capacity for reporting. The committee recommends implementation by 2010.
3. Require water use reporting for use above 3 Million gallons per year (for any three month period or on an average annual basis) for all self-supplied users as well as “minor” suppliers statewide. Voluntary reporting of metered data or other accurate methods of measurement accepted by the Water Resources Board would commence in January 2005 and would become mandatory by January 2007.

Eliminate recommendation #5 and #6.

Discussion

There are two goals of reporting water use:

1. To establish a knowledge base that is good enough to make water management decisions;
2. To collect information at an appropriate level of resolution to assess impact

In general there are three categories:

Public suppliers subject to Water System Supply Management Plans (WSSMPs)

Water users above the thresholds and

Water users below the threshold

The group discussed the 2010 target date for reporting use by category and whether it was an appropriate amount of time. Mr. Meyer suggested that this is probably as fast as the suppliers could meet the requirements. The issue is not the software, logistically not the office computer, but rather the ability to drive through the system to read the meter as well as the expense to replace meters. Ms. Scott noted the need for funding and the need to acknowledge the authority of the PUC over certain suppliers. The PUC denied the increase required to improve meters for the Providence system.

Ms. Richardson restated the hydrological analysis and the level of use that could potentially impact a typical watershed in Rhode Island. She explained that, in analyzing several small watersheds around the state, it generally took about 100 acres to generate a perennial stream. Previous analysis by the RIDEM around the state showed that a consumptive use of 0.15 MGD/mi² moved a river from flow-healthy to flow-threatened. In a 100-acre watershed that amount is equal to 22,500 gallons per day.

Ms. Wild reviewed analysis she prepared to assist in estimating the approximate numbers of users that would be required to report. Approximately 250-300 users would be required to report based upon the threshold of 8, 200 mgd (3 Million gallons per year). She also outlined a method for refining the numbers and developing the contact list. The community suppliers already report and water use data could be collected with an additional check box on the Department of Health form.

There was considerable discussion about offering incentives for voluntary reporting (installation of meters, no fee for voluntary reporting, fees for mandatory reporting), the length of the phase in period, budget cycles, implementation and data management.

The remainder of the meeting was dedicated to a discussion of the presentation content and responsibilities for completion. Joe McLoughlin agreed to summarize/consolidate the slides describing research of other states and provide them to Liz Scott for any further input. Emily Wild agreed to develop slides that review the use categories, where data is actual or estimated and where reporting would address data gaps. Anne Veeger agreed to serve as the central contact for all changes and additions and to provide slides on water use statewide, the need for reporting, and recommendations.